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AUTHOR Buchmann, Margret
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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests that the conception of teacher thinking must be expanded beyond planning and decision making. People's ordinary conception of thinking includes imagining and remembering, judging and interpreting, as well as aspects of caring and feeling. To understand the scope and meaning of teachers' thought researchers must broaden and diversify their ideas and also reconsider the assumed links of teacher thinking to action and utility. The paper analyzes the concept and activity of contemplation as one crucial process of teacher thinking that directs and supports the comprehensive practical life. Defining contemplation as careful attention and wonderstruck beholding, it examines subject matter and children as primary objects of teachers' contemplative concern. An argument is made for the practicality of contemplation by developing a concept of practice that goes beyond what an individual teacher does or what can be typically observed in teaching. The paper contends that contemplation and practice in a moral sense mutally involve each other; in reality, the activity of contemplation depends on political and practical wisdom. The paper includes examples of teacher contemplation and draws on philosophical work, both classic and current, for illustration. (Author/JD)

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THE CAREFUL VISION: HOW PRACTICAL IS CONTEMPLATION IN TEACHING?

Margret Buchmann

NCRTE

National
Center for Research
on Teacher Education

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Abstract

This philosophical paper on teacher thinking has three main purposes. First, it suggests that the conception of teacher thinking must be expanded beyond planning and decision making. People's ordinary conception of thinking includes, for instance, imagining and remembering, judging and interpreting, as well as aspects of caring and feeling. Hence, to understand the full scope and meaning of teachers' thoughts, researchers have to broaden and diversify their ideas and also reconsider the assumed links of teacher thinking to action and utility. Second, the paper analyzes the concept and activity of contemplation as one crucial process of teacher thinking that, though remote from the immediacies of planning and decision making, directs and supports the comprehensive practical life. Defining contemplation as careful attention and wonderstruck beholding, it examines subject matter and children as primary objects of teachers' contemplative concern. Third, the paper makes an argument for the practicality of contemplation by developing a concept of practice that goes beyond what an individual teacher does or what can be typically observed in teaching. This collective, ethical concept of practice invokes vision and ideals of perfection as part of the teacher's active life; these spiritual and ideal elements of teaching can be made available in contemplation. The paper contends that, in principle, contemplation and practice (in this moral sense) mutually involve each other; in reality, the activity of contemplation depends for its flourishing on political and practical wisdom. It includes examples of teacher contemplation and draws on philosophical work, both classic and current.

THE CAREFUL VISION: HOW PRACTICAL IS CONTEMPLATION IN TEACHING?[1]

Margret Buchmann[2]

The painter's vision is not a lens,
it trembles to caress the light. . . .
Yet why not say what happened?
Pray for the grace of accuracy
Vermeer gave to the sun's illumination
stealing like the tide across a map
to his girl solid with yearning

From Robert Lowell (1977) "Epilogue"

Teacher Thinking: Vision or Decision?

To speak of contemplation and practicality in one breath is to be guilty of a contradiction in terms, or so it would seem. Practicality is commonly associated with usefulness and work, while contemplation is a careful attention that suspends willing and doing in favor of a quiet, absorbed kind of looking concerned with seeing things--events, relations, concepts, objects, people--*as they are*. Why is contemplation desirable and what does it require? What could be the place of this wonder-struck thinking in teaching? How can this stance be for the sake of practice? What sorts of things might set teachers wondering? To address such questions, we have to arrive at some understanding of "practice" and "contemplation" and a great part of my paper will aim to establish just that: an understanding good enough for getting a discussion going. A prior question, however, is why researchers and teacher educators ought to consider teaching as an occasion for contemplation at all.

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[1]Precursors of this paper are Buchmann's "Impractical Philosophizing About Teachers' Arguments," published in *Educational Theory* (1987) and, "Argument and Contemplation in Teaching," appearing in the *Oxford Review of Education* (1988). An earlier version of this paper was presented at the fourth International Study Association on Teacher Thinking Conference, "Teacher Thinking and Action: Evolution of a Perspective," University of Nottingham, England, 14-18 September 1988.

[2]Margret Buchmann is a professor of teacher education at Michigan State University and senior researcher at the Institute for Research on Teaching. The author gratefully acknowledges Thomas Warren (1988) and Lynda Stone (1988) whose work led her to some of the sources she draws on here; others were located by Nancy Wiemers. Jonas Soltis's exploration of the virtues of teaching has influenced her own thinking; Deborah Loewenberg Ball, Magdalene Lampert, Susan Florio-Ruane and David Cohen have contributed helpful thoughts and friendship. She also wishes to thank Cathy Siebert for her assistance in manuscript preparation and Rose Snitgen for preparing the manuscript for publication.

Educational researchers and philosophers tend to identify knowledge with science and thinking with decision making. But people think about a great many things they can never know, and--in its search for meaning--the need to think is different from the need to act. The focus on teachers' decisions and planning reflects a trend characteristic of modernity with its belief in the lonely choosing will and an implicit preference for a form of rationality in which goals, instrumentality and the calculation of outcomes take pride of place (see, e.g., Buchmann, 1985). Since it has a point, perhaps many points, we take it for granted that teaching has to do with utility; purposeful action, in turn, implicates the will and requires means-ends thinking and other kinds of analyses; acting, willing, as well as planning, are activities of persons buffeted about by circumstance and conflicting desires. It fits with this picture of practice that we turn to scientific knowledge in hopes that it will enhance the life of action by making it more calculable.

Contemplation, by contrast, is a self-contained thinking that is neither willing nor scientific knowing; it is "non-utilitarian, non-volitional, non-emotional, non-analytical . . . an attitude of pure attention, an act of unselfish almost impersonal concentration, an incorporeal 'gazing'" (Haezrahi, 1956, p. 36). If this seems strange, recall that, in ordinary language, thinking figures as imagining, remembering, meditating, regarding and conceiving--internal mental activities that likewise involve the metaphor of vision, and not that of decision. Caring and concerned, the thoughtful person is appreciated for an intrinsically valuable quality of attention to the *right* objects of thought that is not necessarily goal-directed or oriented toward planning. Being thoughtless is something we criticize and regret as a failure of goodness.

To comprehend teacher thinking rather than define it by stipulation, we need "to stop and think" and attend to the diverse contexts in which people talk about thinking. To get clearer about the practicality of any kind of thinking, we have to consider what it means to say that something is "practical". Having given some thought to these issues, we will be ready to examine contemplation--its stance, requirements, and objects--and look at its contributions to the practical life in teaching in terms of human flourishing: thinking and living well, thus moving from sheer seeing to moral action. While excellent activity is vulnerable to circumstance, I shall argue that teaching in essence depends on contemplative thought.

When Do We Talk About Thinking?

We comment on a Dutch seventeenth century painting by saying, "The girl sits at a table, pen in hand, looking dreamily into the distance; her servant, ready to carry her letter, is smiling the smile of a conspirator: I think the girl is wrapped in thoughts of her lover." Confronted with a puzzling situation, we think about it, that is, we turn it over in our mind,

not satisfied until we have made sense of it: so thinking has to do with making meaning. Thinking, we also remember the past and interpret it. "Do you recall when mother told us how she lost her chance to go to high school when her own mother died?--I think she meant to encourage us to go farther and learn more than she was able to do." Modern philosophers have made much of thinking as a critical activity of mind that probes the grounds of beliefs; but one might say that the biblical Job was also preoccupied with the question, "What is the evidence?" Yet when we ask a friend, "What is your thinking on that?" we are ready to accept answers that can, depending on context, derive from facts, ideas or intuitions, as well as common sense and personal feelings. We may also be treated to a story.

Are There Experts in Thinking?

Thinking, like story-telling, is part of our human inheritance. It is an ordinary experience and may encompass nearly everything that happens to people. We think because we are human, and if someone tells us to think we do not ask a specialist, "How do I do that?"

> By birthright we are all not only thinkers but also singer and dancers, poets and painters, teachers and story-tellers. This means that the professional singer or painter, poet or teacher, dancer or story-teller, is a professional in a different way from the solicitor or doctor, physician or statistician. (Bambrough, 1980, p. 60; see also Popper, 1980)

Considering thinking a human activity is not to say that character, choice, and chance cannot lead people to do more or less thinking--or singing, dancing, and story-telling. Such human activities can also be done with more or less engagement or aplomb. Still, if some people make thinking their business, they will become professionals without thereby becoming experts in the sense of people being proficient, say, at the law of torts or at radiology.

Part of the point here is that we can ask someone, "When did you decide to become a lawyer or a laboratory technician?" while the question, "When did you *decide* to become a thinker?" is more like asking a woman born in America when she decided to become an American; that is, the latter kind of question is incomprehensible except for very special cases. As "a natural need of human life," Hannah Arendt (1978a) concludes,

> thinking is not a prerogative of the few but an ever-present faculty in everybody; by the same token, inability to think is not a failing of the many who lack brain power but an ever-present possibility for everybody--scientists, scholars, and other specialists in mental enterprises not excluded. (p. 191)

When we deplore unthinking men as "sleepwalkers," the remedy is not turning them into some new brand of specialist.

The Many Faces of Thinking

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "to think" as the most general verb expressing mental activity and documents its usage in 17 variations with numerous subdivisions. To a greater or lesser extent conscious of what they are doing, people engage in the activities of thinking as they inhabit our world: living, loving, learning.

To think means "to form or have in mind as an idea"; "to consider, meditate on, ponder;" "to have, or make, a train of ideas pass through the mind," which, in turn, can be observed or viewed mentally. Forming ideas of people, things, and events, thinking is imagining, conceiving, hence, a speculative making that somehow responds to reality. Thinking may require effort, as when one applies one's mind to something, giving it a steady mental attention that aims at comprehension. Thoughts can thus be fixed in the mind and worked out in detail. Some thoughts, however, have their beginning and end in a wonder that is "neither puzzlement nor surprise nor perplexity; it is an *admiring* wonder" (Arendt, 1978a, p. 143). Thinking can also lead to solving a problem by a process of thought, or eventuate in a project whose outcomes, once it is put into action, can again be considered. Consideration merges with memory in the senses of "to think" as "to call to mind, bear in mind, recollect or remember." "Remembrance" as Hannah Arendt (1978b) points out, "has a natural affinity to thought. . . . Thought-trains rise naturally, almost automatically, out of remembering, without any break" (p. 37).

Judgment comes to the fore when thinking involves particulars that require having or forming an opinion, good or bad, valuing or esteeming something or someone, highly or otherwise. And poets have associated thinking with the claims of the heart; as Wordsworth wrote, "'Tis still the hour of thinking, feeling, living"; recall also John Donne's phrase: "A naked thinking heart." Holding someone in regard (as the girl in the Dutch painting does) is not just looking at a person but *liking* what one sees, and imagines. These contexts and examples of usage show that thinking is more to us than an instrument of regulation, direction, and control in knowing and deciding, or a mechanism for assessing the grounds of belief and reckoning with the consequences of action. In comprehending vision, it includes speculation and contemplative wonder.

The Freedom of Thinking

Though conditioned by culture and language, thinking has a certain autonomy. Trains of thought can take any point of departure and lead anywhere, setting things in motion--at least in the realm of thought. People think in this fashion of many more things than they

will, or can, ever do. The will has none of the organic independence of thought from the facts and laws of the world. Thinking plays havoc with the restrictive conditions of ordinary experience, such as the time's continuity, people's location in time and space, and the requirements of necessity related to the social and material aspects of human nature. Thoughts do not commit publicly as action does. People can change their mind and switch their attention from one thing to another, as they see fit. Hannah Arendt (1978a) describes the freedom and insubstantiality peculiar to thinking as follows:

> Thinking is "out of order" not merely because it stops all the other activities so necessary for the business of living and staying alive, but because it inverts all ordinary relationships: what is near and appears directly to our senses is now far away and what is distant is actually present. While thinking I am not where I actually am; I am surrounded not by sense-objects but by images that are invisible to everybody else. It is as though I had withdrawn into some never-never land, the land of invisibles, of which I would know nothing had I not this faculty of remembering and imagining. Thinking annihilates temporal as well as spatial distances. I can anticipate the future, think of it as though it were already present, and I can remember the past as though it had not disappeared. (p. 85)

Yet the autonomy of thinking is not airiness in the depreciating sense. Thoughts are intangible, elastic, light in movement, even fanciful. But innocence is also lost in thought. Thus it does not follow that thoughts are void of substance or effects. Sad as well as happy changes in human relations and self-understanding are wrought by thought. Reason's quest for meaning may not be successful. Once one has started a nontrifling argument with oneself, one cannot always abandon it, or shirk its consequences. Literature and personal experience testify to the power of thinking to do away with given beliefs, to open--as well as close--avenues for thought and action. And thought's suspension of natural laws coexists with the assumption that thinking includes being mindful of others.

Thoughtfulness as an Amiable Virtue

The admission, "I should have thought of that," covers many different kinds of failures, of which a failure in forethought relating to outcomes of action is only one. What can we learn about thinking when we consider the absence of thought? First, "thoughtlessness" has much less to do with lack of intellectual keenness than with a disposition and capacity for consideration, as a "taking into account" for which the well-being and feelings of other people matter. Extreme cleverness may interfere with that disposition and does not, in itself, yield that capacity.

Second, "thoughtlessness" is not a merely descriptive term, nor considered a mere mistake. People judge one's failure to acknowledge "the claim on our thinking attention

that all events and facts make by virtue of their existence" (Arendt, 1978a, p. 4) as a moral failure. We reproach someone as thoughtless who is not taking thought and, being heedless, ignores what "calls for" attention. An assumption is that, with proper looking, we can hardly fail to see the import of some particular thing or things, and that such attentive perception is amiable and humanly required. In her analysis of the Eichmann trials in Jerusalem, Hannah Arendt (1978a) builds on these assumptions embedded in ordinary language by asking:

> Could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention, regardless of results and specific content, could this activity be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually "condition" them against it? (p. 5)

Considering how people regard the absence of thought greatly qualifies the freedom we have attributed to thinking. Sometimes we assume that there is a duty to think and, since matters can rarely be settled once and for all by thinking, this is a continuing duty. Things call for attention not just because they are "thought provoking" or intriguing but because we ought to pay attention to them, putting aside the claims of the insistent self, its urges and preoccupations. Being thoughtful or mindful is therefore associated with kindness and care and, where it does concern choice, also with prudence.

Being prudent means having the ability to determine the most suitable course of action, that is, the course adapted or appropriate to a person's character, condition, needs, as well as the purpose, object or occasion, usually with reference to the moral quality of action (right or wrong). Today, the concept of prudence carries overtones of utility and cautious self-interest not altogether amiable, or good. Ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and Aquinas saw no reason to distinguish prudence from moral philosophy; they considered thinking about the ends of action--as intrinsically desirable human goods--as practical from beginning to end (see Finnis, 1984); I will hold this point for further consideration.

Interim Summary

To take stock: in looking at thinking, we have returned to a major concern of researchers and teacher educators: a teacher's capacity to determine (right) courses of action and the dispositions and processes that presumably underlie that capacity.[3] But we have not just come back full circle for we have begun to reinterpret the scope and meaning of thinking, weakening its links to the choosing will, action and utility, cognition and "hardheaded"

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[3]Some researchers shrink from explicitly making the moral judgment implied in a concept such as prudence or sagacity, preferring, instead, to assume that any action is reasonable from the point of view of the actor; the attendant confusion of what is capable of being understood, or of rational explanation, with what is capable of being justified--a right belief or action--is troubling (see, Buchmann, 1986).

expertise (as something in which people must, by nature, be deficient). In doing so, we have traversed domains of ordinary human interest, including good and evil, and touched on a variety of everyday thought processes, such as imagining and remembering, judging and interpreting, caring and feeling.

In broadening and diversifying the picture of thinking, and hence of teacher thinking, we have made room for wonderment and come up repeatedly against the concept of "attention" related to the binding claims that people, facts, ideas, or events have on our consideration--whether thought eventuates in projects, dissolves into further thought, or slowly peters out. In thinking about thinking, we have shifted from a metaphor of decision to a metaphor of comprehending vision that entails an "ought" (see Murdoch, 1985). Now it is necessary to pull in the conceptual reins and consider some distinctions and priorities helpful for the questions of this paper.

Attention, Knowing, and the Will

Are some kinds of thinking more important than others, so that one can establish some precedence in their order of logic or importance? Willing, acting, judging, and, of course, knowing, depend on people's preliminary reflections, on their careful attention to relevant objects of thought, in the sense of "object" as that which one attends to (i.e., not necessarily a thing). Mere thinking would thus seem to have priority over any judging, willing and acting that may come in its train.

While taking an instrumental view of thinking, Dewey likewise assumes that acting and knowing depend on attention. In "School and Society" (1899/1956), for instance, he considers human development, at the individual and collective level, in terms of the development of attention. Starting with proximate and concrete objects, Dewey argues, young children's attention takes in what moves, impelled by a sense of use and operation. More voluntary attention emerges with the conception of remoter ends and means-ends thinking. In the transition from practical problems and tangible results to intellectual difficulties and their solution, Dewey finds "true, reflective attention"; in science as a school subject, accordingly:

> There is a change from the practical attitude of making and using cameras to the consideration of the problems involved in this--the principles of light, angular measurements, etc., which give the theory or explanation of the practice. (p. 147)

Hence theory can become quite rarefied. Yet the point where it begins and whence it returns are intentions to be realized and problems to be solved. The issue, in Dewey's terms, is "mental control;" with thinking assimilated into willing, knowing must have the acting human being, or subject, at its center.

From one point of view, this account seems almost incontrovertible. Yet it does not square with objectivity, as an ideal that animates much human effort at comprehension, inside and outside of science (see Nagel, 1979). The attraction of this ideal derives from an assumption that things are what they are from no particular perspective, and that decenterring moves us closer toward truth and justice. Francis Bacon states flatly, "It is a poor center of a man's actions, *himself*." From this point of view, the subject is a source of distortions and must itself be set aside.

Thus Schopenhauer (1844/undated) contends that, under the shadow of the will, it is impossible to see things at all. A man and, we might add, a woman, rises to (true) knowledge in and through contemplation, which allows perceiving things, events, relations, and people "just as they are," while suspending habitual ways of seeing that presuppose the centrality of human purposes even in inquiry and abstract thinking. Contemplative attention--which we are capable of, in principle, due to the freedom of thinking described by Hannah Arendt--establishes conditions for knowledge on Schopenhauer's account:

> If, raised by the power of the mind, a man relinquishes the common way of looking at things, gives up tracing . . . their relations to each other, the final goal of which is always a relation to his own will; if he thus ceases to consider the where, the when, the why, and the wither of things, and looks simply and solely at the *what*; if, further, he does not allow abstract thought, the concepts of the reason, to take possession of his consciousness, but instead of all this, gives the whole power of his mind to perception, sinks himself entirely in this, and lets his whole consciousness be filled with quiet contemplation. (p. 231)

Beholding things, we may come to see them truly, but we are also lost to the world and its chains of intention and causation. What kind of knowing is involved in admiring wonder? Why should contemplative attention be desirable, let alone practical, in teaching? To dispel the appearance of paradox in examining the practicality of contemplation, we must work with a concept of the practical that goes beyond defining practice as production. Having looked at what we mean by thinking, we must reconsider what it means to say that something is "practical," and see whether and how the concept of practice may involve contemplation.

Is Practice Practical?

A practised carpenter has experience and skill, knows what to do for the purposes of her craft, yet is supposed to get more proficient in the doing. Though practice means the habitual carrying on of something, customary or constant action, it implies an elusive and exalted ideal of perfection to which individual practitioners will advance to varying degrees, while none are likely to reach it. This general failure of completion and perfection stems

from people's shortcomings and the vulnerability of excellent activity to impediment; it does not, in any case, invalidate the ideal implied by perfection. Rather than being an objective or definite goal to be reached, its function is that of a shared transcendental idea, connoting a quality, endowment, or accomplishment of the highest order (usually in a good sense). Such collective conceptions of human goods and excellences direct and stimulate effort and call for our attention, that is, people assume that we should be mindful of them. Given practical and political wisdom, these conceptions are instantiated and approximately realized in indefinitely many ways and numberless particular situations.

When we speak of carpentry or medicine as a practice, we have therefore much more in mind than people's traits, acquired capacities, or the modes, outcomes, and typical forms of individual work and action. We imagine some configuration of goods and excellences which characterize that domain of human activity; these interrelated conceptions do not only refer to knowledge and the outcomes of action, but to dispositions, skills, and ways of seeing and responding by which we can recognize carpentry or medical practice as distinctive forms of human *striving* that can take many specific forms. Checking student answers on a test or weeding are not practices in this sense, but teaching and cultivating one's garden are, though there are many different ways of going about these complex, patterned activities.

Each of these ways, however, has a quality of relatedness that, predicated on attention, resonates to the possibilities of what one is working with--in terms of a constitutive background of fidelities laying their hold upon the imagination. Thus, the learning of a cabinetmaker's apprentice

> is not mere practice, to gain facility in the use of tools. Nor does he merely gather knowledge about the customary forms of the things he is to build. If he is to become a true cabinetmaker, he makes himself *answer and respond* above all to the different kinds of wood and to the shapes slumbering within wood. . . . In fact, this relatedness to wood is what maintains his whole craft. (Heidegger, 1968, pp. 14-15; italics added)

And, while teaching is people work and carpentry wood work, these practices share, with others, ethical universals and vulnerabilities to impediment.

Virtues, Practice, and the Force of Circumstance

Due to the assumption of special knowledge and skill, and an associated power over others, participants in a practice should be (in the sense of having a duty to be) people their clients can trust: trust to do their best, to be concerned about how their actions affect

others, to be honest and fair, and to acknowledge the particular claims which their work has on its practitioners.[4]

Such claims result in closing many options to the acting, thinking person as soon as she takes up a practice in earnest. Carpenters cannot choose to make a rickety cabinet with drawers that are permanently stuck while maintaining that they practice carpentry. Such behavior would provoke the indignant question, "How *can* you call yourself a carpenter (doctor, teacher, and so on)?"--indicating that titles of this kind are more than names, presupposing instead expectations that practitioners have certain goods in mind, that they acknowledge and abide by certain configurations of standards to the best of their capacity, which they are, moreover, supposed to improve.

Doctors caring more for their own well-being than for that of their patients may hold down a job but don't practice medicine in the sense of practice that we are talking about. This explains the presence of doctors in battlefields and hospital wards for the victims of infectious diseases, though the amount of risk to be undergone knowingly may be a matter of debate among practitioners. Work in the ivory tower, too, calls for courage, as when professors have to stand up for what is best in their field in dealing with student work, are bound to challenge claims to knowledge they consider ill-founded even if these are put forth by friends or by colleagues of high social authority, and are supposed to publicize the fact that they have made an error in their own work. In general,

> if someone says that he cares for some individual, community, or cause but is unwilling to risk harm or danger on his, her or its own behalf, he puts in question the genuineness of his care and concern. Courage, the capacity to risk harm or damage to oneself, has its role in human life because of this connection with care and concern. (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 192)

In the emphasis on a certain *quality* of engagement, attention, and relatedness, admirable in its own right, care and concern differ vastly from calculations of utility in terms of outcomes, although considering the consequences and efficiency of one's actions is not inconsistent with care and concern.

While, on the surface, "practicality" stands in opposition to ideals and perfection, one cannot participate in a practice--take part and share, in association with others, in some form of human endeavor--when one is mean-spirited and dishonest, as well as ignorant of or careless about the internal goods and ends a practice does not only embody (in variable and approximate forms and instances) but extend. This concept of practice draws attention to the fact that human flourishing--acting, thinking, and living well--is not single or solitary,

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[4]This duty follows from at least three different senses of "assumption:" as supposition or postulate, appropriation or possession, and the taking upon oneself of a character; that is, it follows from what people believe someone else to have as well as from what these others have presumable acquired, by way of accomplishments character.

nor a feat of production. And the impetus for change does not only flow from the facts of history and social pressures but from the very idea of perfection with its connotation of incompleteness.

Hope for the blooming of virtues, human powers and goods underlies MacIntyre's (1984) summary definition of practice as: "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended (p. 187). Yet according to Martha Nussbaum (1986), the good condition of people cannot guarantee that virtues flourish, expanding their scope and operation. Excellent activities, which include considerate and speculative thinking, fail to reach completion and perfection due to uncontrolled circumstances that may be obstructive in several ways:

> We might think of activities as like rivers: one way they can be impeded is to be dammed up and prevented from reaching a destination. Another way would be to be filled up with sludge, so that their channel would become cramped and muddy, their continuous flow slower, the purity of their waters defiled. (p. 327)

The virtuous do not only do the right thing at the right time and in the right manner but luck--in not cramping their style--has often been kinder to them than to others (on the concept of "moral luck" see Williams, 1981).

In teaching as a contemporary human service profession, increasing bureaucratization and legislation of the ends of practice (construed narrowly and typically in extrinsic terms) are instances of the second kind of obstruction; ironically, educational research, meant to promote goods of learning, has made considerable contributions to thus muddying the waters (see Wise, 1979). External conditions and misguided beliefs enacted as policies have the power to obstruct any activity that is the bearer of human goods.

Ideas of Perfection Are Practical

Assuming an idea of, as Shakespeare said, "right perfection wrongfully disgraced," practice looks impractical: starry-eyed rather than down-to-earth. It requires commitment to intangible ideas of excellence (general human virtues and the ideals particular to a practice), the exercise of acquired virtues that may not be externally rewarded or even punished, and the wholehearted, personal acknowledgment of claims upon oneself. Such claims may not be enforced, or enforceable, by anything except one's socially incul-

cated--and remembered--sense of what participation in that practice *means*. Remembrance here cannot be memorization, but is, as memory, a kind of "devoted thought,"

> the gathering and convergence of thought upon what everywhere demands to be thought about first of all. Memory . . . safely keeps and keeps concealed within it that to which at each given time thought must be given before all else, in everything that essentially is. (Heidegger, 1968, p. 11)[5]

It also follows that--while performance depends on skills and habits, formal and informal knowledge, before it can grow into proficiency and artfulness--practice cannot be defined by compiling lists of skills and other (important) endowments of a technical kind in disjunction with an understanding of and commitment to ends: the points internal to a collective form of human striving. That these endeavors may change across time and place and are vulnerable to impediment strengthens the case for people's living awareness and examination of ends, or their doing of moral philosophy.

Hence many things are "practical," in the literal sense of pertaining or relating to practice, that violate the taken-for-granted opposition of the practical and the theoretical, speculative, or ideal. These include ideas of excellence and standards of admirable performance relating to the human goods defining the point, or points, of a practice; dispositions for thinking and being concerned about these conceptions as one participates in a practice, standing in relation both to other practitioners and people affected by one's work; as well as general human virtues such as courage, justice and honesty, without which it would be difficult to imagine how one could act on elusive ideals of excellence and work, in given circumstances, towards some approximate realization of the internal goods constituting a practice, resonating to the possibilities of whatever one is working with.

Participating in Practice and Vision

Human virtues and excellences are acquired as we live, study, and work with others. A newborn child has no more of a notion of honesty than he has of mathematics or good teaching. Inducting people into a practice entails helping them see and form ideas of perfection relating to their work and its specific internal goods, fostering dispositions to think and be concerned about those goods and the people affected by one's work, and

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[5]The analytic philosopher John Wilson (e.g., 1975) provides a rationale and suggests a method for what is implicit in Heidegger's call for "memory." Unsurprisingly, the concepts and distinctions of ordinary language map out basic phenomena of human interest and concern that we need to get adequately clear about through what he impartially calls "clarifying concepts," "making sense," "philosophy" or even "phenomenology." Wilson believes that education and educational research are prone to fallacy and fantasy due to a lack of serious attention to what "is *already enshrined in* our language" (p. 177).

upholding--as well as feeling the import of--general human virtues such as truthfulness and courage.

John Wilson (1975) makes a certain intellectual and moral seriousness central to his thinking about the preparation of teachers who, as he argues, have to show--and dispense--care and concern for the subjects they teach. "One could not properly be described as 'doing science' or 'learning history' if one simply did not care about the results of experiments or what contemporary historical documents say" (p. 111). He points out that such seriousness is a precondition of further learning about teaching, subjects, as well as children, thus relating the disposition for caring and being concerned to the development of proficiency, or the comparative excellence suffused by a sense of distinctive goods stimulating further (imperfect) efforts--in teaching and elsewhere. It is thus that we make the manifold of human goods available to people while extending and refining those goods and the virtues of practice.

Although they retain a certain imprecision, ideas of (right) perfection provide a growing sense of order and direction and thereby fashion and further their development as well as human flourishing. They do this by helping people to constitute, and by attaching them, to their best selves and to worthy objects of attention, by illuminating the real and desirable through vision, and by supplying ways to distinguish the passable from the excellent in our intentions and the products of human labor, work, and action (see, for this important set of distinctions, Arendt, 1987). As Iris Murdoch (1985) comments, an idea of perfection "moves and possibly changes, us (as artist, worker, agent) because it inspires love in the part of us that is most worthy:"

> One cannot feel unmixed love for a mediocre moral standard any more than one can for the work of a mediocre artist. The idea of perfection is also a natural producer of order. In its *light* we come to see that A, which superficially resembles B, is really better than B. And this can occur, indeed must occur, without our having the sovereign idea in any sense "taped." In fact it is in its nature that we cannot get it taped. (p. 62)

Helping people become attached to ideas of perfection in their field (future or present) is a vital *practical* task, which depends on recalling what a practice is about in the first place; making circumstances that can be controlled more propitious--so that they favor excellent activities characteristic of a practice rather than obstruct them--is a complementary task. Both necessitate looking carefully at the human goods and excellences that constitute a practice. Together with an opennes for the world and its possibilities, recognition and love of these ideas is required for human flourishing. To improve teaching, for example, all kinds of people (not only teachers but teacher educators, administrators,

policymakers, as well as educational researchers) have to give serious attention to education and its intrinsic good of learning. That without this contemplation there can be many decisions without any enhancement of practice is a fact of history.

Thinking, therefore, that is not goal-oriented and does not refer to particular actions--their planning, execution, and effects--is practical nevertheless and deeply consequential. Indeed, it appears that we are rising instead of descending to the practical where we attend to its internal goods and excellences: "we can contemplate the moral life in activity as well as the starry heaven above" (Rorty, 1980, p. 378). I will further investigate these claims about the intrinsic relations of contemplation and practice and the enhancement of action by contemplation by drawing on the scholastic discussion of the active and the contemplative life, especially in teaching.

While the preceding analysis moved from the concept of practice, *via* ends, to contemplation, I now reverse this direction. Moving from the concept of contemplation, *via* friendship, to practice, I aim to show how the contemplative experience "filtered through categories of love . . . [plunges] . . . back into the world in the service of others" (Richardson, 1987, p. 117).

Contemplation and the Life of Action

St. Thomas Aquinas (1966a) describes the active and the contemplative life in *Summa Theologica* where he also considers the question to which form of life teaching might belong. Contemplation has the autonomy of thinking. In the active life, people work to affect things or other people and are often ruffled by their recalcitrance and the force of circumstance. The contemplative life also involves a kind of application and discipline in cogitation or meditation; and thinking as an inner dialogue with oneself (in which many voices may be heard) prepares the mind for contemplation.

But contemplation is the point where activity comes to rest; its essential qualities are those of a wonder-struck beholding, as we attend to some desirable or lovable good--especially any truth whatever--and dwell on it. This requires clarity of vision and serenity in the concentration on a quiet kind of looking. In the words of St. Thomas, contemplation amounts "to a simple gaze upon a truth" (Thomas Aquinas, 1966a, p. 23). It engages the emotions, the will, and the moral virtues, only insofar as these dispose one towards peace and purity of heart, and help one direct one's attention to worthy objects: because of their inexhaustibility and attraction, the work of attention can take a lifetime.

Recently, Polanyi (1962) has most clearly given voice to the contemplative experience in science. Drawing on history and autobiographical accounts, especially from Kepler and Einstein, he depicts scientific change in terms of compelling rational insight, apprehended internally, rather than in terms of an inexorable accumulation of facts. He sees objectivity

not in things or intersubjectivity but in reason, or theory, as "a vision that speaks for itself in guiding us to an ever deeper understanding of reality" (pp. 5-6). Relativity theory, Polanyi believes, found acceptance in modern physics, in advance of the data, because of "a beauty that exhilarates and a profundity that entrances us . . . qualities which make the scientists rejoice in a vision like that of relativity . . . stand for those peculiar intellectual harmonies which reveal, more profoundly and permanently than any sense-experience, the presence of objective truth" (pp. 15-16).[6]

In contemplative experience, truth and goodness converge, and the good can be contemplated, "not just by dedicated experts but by ordinary people: [in] an attention which is not just the planning of particular good actions but an attempt to look right away from the self towards a distant transcendent perfection, a source of uncontaminated energies, a source of *new* and quite undreamt-of virtue" (Murdoch, 1985, p. 101).

Sinking Oneself in Contemplation

Relieved from the quality of wanting in any immediate or distracting sense, the contemplative life does not comprise the accidental rewards of (external) labor; instead, its rewards are intrinsic, relating to ultimate things and a perfection of the human mind and its joy (in the sense of a deep and lasting satisfaction that fosters one's best self while not revolving around the self of need and desire). Its ends and delights stem from contemplation itself and from the value of its objects. The contemplative life requires a person so inclined, but no outward recipient, product or effect.

Still, actual life circumstances matter, as pointed out earlier, for they may be more or less hospitable to contemplation. The characteristics of the larger social and political environment, moreover, influence the extent to which its objects must be otherworldly; a corrupt society, clearly, does not in itself offer much that is lovable or desirable to contemplate (see Rorty, 1980). A workplace may be structured so as to enforce attention to inappropriate or unworthy objects. To this extent, then, the contemplative life--and its potential closeness to the active life--depend on political and practical wisdom.

Since we are rational animals we see in truth something we love, and desire to be enlightened. This statement appears to move contemplation close to examination or investigation. Yet, while admiration and joy (though not repose) are compatible with inquiry in any domain, its simplicity and comparative self-sufficiency mark off contemplation from research, logical analysis, or reflection on action which try to penetrate where contem-

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[6]This substantive view of objectivity agrees with Nagel's (1979) process interpretation insofar as it implies some de-centering: from the senses to reason, from (irrational) subjectivity to universal (intellectual) standards passionately endorsed. Polanyi's view allows for an identification of objectivity and, in a sense, subjectivity with truth which is impossible on Nagel's account, however.

plation aims to receive. In manner and kind, the ascesis of contemplation is likewise different from the "self-denial" of science and logic which both encompass assertions, or the vindication of claims within given frames of reference. Contemplation requires its very own kind of detachment: an almost complete "letting go." Consider Haezrahi's (1956) example of the falling leaf:

> A farmer on seeing the leaf fall might mark the ark it describes in its descent, deduce from this the direction of the wind, the imminence of rain, and hurry off to do whatever farmers do when rain is imminent. A botanist may observe the leaf, think that it is falling rather earlier in the year than usual, pick it up and examine its capillaries, look for signs of disease or other causes for the weakening of the tissues and so on. A sensitive soul, on seeing the leaf fall may be induced to reflect on the transience of worldly glory . . . and generally indulge in sad musings. A poet . . . may be led to think of a metre or rhythm he could use in his next poem, or of a striking metaphor. (p. 35)

What these different people have in common is that each of them only perceives the falling leaf from his or her own system of relevances, looking, at the same time, beyond the leaf and its falling to other phenomena of intention or causation in applied and natural science, spiritual life, and art.

Contemplation sets aside ties to self-involved willing and feeling, to given conceptual frameworks and schemes of utility, substituting a careful attention that does not exploit the object of thought, nor change it in any way. This suspension responds to the influence exerted upon the mind by the ideals of truth and goodness and becomes possible due to the freedom of thinking with its inversion of ordinary relationships and potential for withdrawal. Contemplation does not necessitate turning one's back on the world, however. Rather, it requires, as Schopenhauer points out, giving up common ways of looking that revolve around the subjective will. Although thought will draw us into the land of invisibles more often than not, all things, actions, and events can be contemplated.[7] The active and the contemplative life can make their way side by side.

The Priority of Contemplation

Though the active and the contemplative life can be distinguished, both are forms of human life, and in an actual existence now one, now the other form will predominate. And it is possible for action to lead to contemplation and for contemplation to lead to action: both forms of life are complementary. In accordance with most medieval authors, however, Aquinas (Thomas Aquinas, 1966a) maintains that contemplation is superior to the

[7]See Richardson (1987) who, basing his analysis on Stierli (1977), traces the notion that contemplation requires immersing oneself in the world to Ignatius Loyola's belief that we must find God in all things, at work in the world.

active life.[8] He stresses that the "return to the active life is guided by the contemplative" (p. 83); divorced from contemplation, the active life would be cut off from its source of value (see p. 117). If action is "shown the way" by contemplation, to which action, as a derivative, must refer back for its ultimate goods and excellences, we can conclude that practice begins and ends in contemplative thought.

These claims may strike one as counterintuitive, for they imply that action *obeys* vision, which itself depends on sinking oneself in thought and perception, and that a kind of internal gazing and admiring wonder, rather than utility or conformity to desire, is the spring from which the meaning and comparative worth of our actions and intentions originate. But if we recall the constitution and development of human practices by intrinsic goods and excellences-which need to be seen and loved by participants--these claims make sense. Virtue depends on seeing things in the right light.

Thought and perception accordingly assume a telling force and energy in exemplifying and enhancing human potential for a well-lived life. A. O. Rorty (1980) paraphrases and summarizes passages from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* that support this point and show just what it means for thinking to be a "human birthright":

> Perceiving is not merely a psychophysical happening, a splendid event in one's life. It is by and in the activity of perceiving (among other things) that we are actualized as the beings we are. Thinking, too, in its various forms, including *theoria*, is not merely a mental activity, although it is certainly at least that. It is, in every sense of the word, a realization of our potentialities. (p. 387, see also Parker, 1984)

This argument provides an affirmative answer to Arendt's question whether thinking could condition one against evil, especially when we remember that "our ability to act well 'when the time comes' depends partly, perhaps largely, upon the quality of our habitual objects of attention" (Murdoch, 1985, p. 56). In other words, it is not only the stance of contemplation and its quality of attachment but the quality of the objects (their nature, kind, or character and their particular excellences) to which it is attached that accounts for the priority of contemplation, since what we thus hold in regard is, by function and affection, the substance of our comprehensive practical life. Action, to quote Murdoch again, "tends to confirm, for better or worse, the background of attachment from which it issues" (p. 71).

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[8]For the ambiguities concerning this issue in Aristotle's thought and attempts at resolution running in the direction my discussion takes, see Defourny (1977), Rorty (1980), and also Parker (1984).

Learning to Let People Learn

There is no *prima facie* difficulty in applying these claims to teaching, where thought and action need to flow from, and return to, the quest for understanding teaching subjects (facts, concepts, events, relations) and people (primarily students) "as they are," and where thought and action without continuing reference to the ultimate good of learning would be without rudder. It is this intrinsic good, Heidegger (1968) suggests, which makes teaching even more difficult than learning:

> And why is teaching more difficult than learning? Not because the teacher must have a larger store of information, and have it always ready. Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn. . . . The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they--he has to learn to let them learn. The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices. The teacher is far less assured of his ground than those who are of theirs. If the relation between the teacher and the taught is genuine, therefore, there is never a place in it for the authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official. It is still an exalted matter, then, to become a teacher. (p. 15)

Teaching demands recognizing that students and teaching subjects can neither be known altogether, nor once and for all. The more teachers think about their subjects, the less they are sure of their ground, becoming clearer about the limits of their understanding and coming to share in the "learned uncertainty" (Buchmann, 1984) of scholars. The more they contemplate their students, the more they will become aware of the fact that their knowledge of them is imperfect and constructed, a fallible vision also because people change, and are supposed to change, in school. Still, students and subject matter have to be brought together, on given understandings: Uncertainty and imperfection are overtaken by the need to act.

What the unknown demands in teaching is devoted, infinitely perfectible, contemplative thought. What it therefore also demands is a sturdy self on the part of the teacher, combined "with a yielding and receptive character of soul" incompatible with undue concern for self-protection or advancement (see Nussbaum, 1986, p. 339, and pp. 337-339 on "greatness of soul;" for a counterexample that also documents the vulnerability of excellence to circumstance, see Lipsky, 1980, on the "client-processing mentality"). Furthermore, where teaching is "letting learn"--and not all teaching can be, or is, like that--youngsters cannot simply be told what things mean, but have to learn to stop and think themselves.

Learning to let them learn, teachers must get out of their students' way, at the right time, in the right manner, and for the right reasons. What the novelist Robertson Davis (1985) terms "real teaching" demands a particular self-restraint, strength and discernment; his explanation of what it requires assists us in interpreting Heidegger:

> To instruct calls for energy, and to remain almost silent, but watchful and helpful, while students instruct themselves, calls for even greater energy. To see someone fall (which will teach him not to fall again) when a word from you would keep him on his feet but ignorant of an important danger, is *one of the tasks* of the teacher that calls for special energy, because holding in is more demanding than crying out. (p. 87; italics added)

These considerations leave out many of the difficulties of school teaching, such as its social, institutional and increasingly bureaucratic nature supplying the practical contemplator with a range of challenges, as well as obstructions, many of which a single teacher's strength and discernment may be unable to tackle. But they indicate why St. Thomas's question whether teaching belongs to the active or the contemplative life must be put in earnest. In practice, the "task of attention goes on all the time and at apparently empty and everyday moments we are "looking," making those little peering efforts of imagination which have such important cumulative results" (Murdoch, 1985, p. 43).

The Fidelities of Teaching

In working out his answer, Aquinas (Thomas Aquinas, 1966a) refers to Aristotle, and points out, first, that the ability to teach is an indication of learning. And, since wisdom and truth in the widest sense belong to the contemplative life, teaching belongs to the contemplative life. He extends this point by stating that, "it seems an office of the contemplative life to impart to an other by teaching, truth that has been contemplated" (p. 61). Office here has the meaning of "good office", a kindness or attention in the service of others; thus Aquinas maintains, "just as it is better to illumine than merely to shine, so it is better to give to others the things contemplated than simply to contemplate" (Thomas Aquinas, 1966b, p. 205).[9]

The subject matter of teaching, or its *first* object of contemplation, is therefore the unending consideration and love of truth in all of its forms, with the teacher taking delight in that love and consideration. Compared to the external acts of teaching, even reflection-on-action, this object and the associated mental life have logical, though not necessarily temporal, priority. One needs to be able to discern the concept of number and enjoy thinking about the meaning of that idea--thus complicating one's understanding and experiencing its limits--to help others think about what a number may be. Without knowing how to look at a painting and recognizing an aesthetic object for what it is, what can a

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[9]While St. Thomas uses a language of teaching as telling (giving, imparting), his argument is not inconsistent with considering teaching as an invitation to share the teacher's contemplative life, especially in looking at subject matter. Nor is it clear that teaching (as a transaction between people resulting in desirable learning) is never telling, or even indoctrination (see Macmillan, 1983; and Garrison, 1986).

teacher say about a child's drawing except that it is "nice" or "true to life"? In teaching, the contemplative precedes the active life because of its nature, and the nature of teaching.

The Wonder of Looking at Things

It is essential that teachers share, with their students, in the authentic and renewing engagement in looking: contemplating the object of thought in its own right without assuming that smooth answers in current language (whether they stem from common sense, textbooks, or science) have done full justice to what there is. Actually, when one manages to look simply, one may well become dissatisfied with one's "adult" or disciplinary grasp of things and return to the openness and enjoyment of wonder, with an attendant desire to learn and understand. Thus, one becomes again teachable. Hawkins (1974) tells a story about a young and very learned physicist that bears on this point.

> My wife was asking him to explain something to her about coupled pendulums. He said, "Well, now, you can see that there's a conversion of . . . Well, there's really a conservation of angle here." She looked up at him. "Well, you see, in the transfer of energy from one pendulum to the other there is . . ." and so on and so on. And she said, "No, I don't mean that, I want you to notice this and tell me what's happening." Finally, he looked at the pendulums and he saw what she was asking. He looked at *it*, and he looked at *her*, and he grinned and said, "Well, I know the right words but I don't understand it either." This confession, wrung from a potential teacher, I've always valued very much. It proves that we're all in *it* together. (p. 62)

Wonderment and awe have their place as well in literary learning. What is a poem, for example? That it is patterned writing, arranged in lines, metrical and often rhyming, indicates something, but not all that much. To say that it is "poetic" or that it is "the work of a poet" begs the question, while to claim that it is concerned with feeling or imagination may be a falsehood--or a truism. After a lifetime of making poems, Robert Lowell (1977) wrote his "Epilogue" (from which I excerpted the motto for this paper), where he wonders about poetry. What is a poem for, what a poet supposed to do--remember or create?--and how can the "blessed" structures of poetry, plot and rhyme, help accomplish the poet's task? The last lines of his "Epilogue" draw poet and reader, humbly, into contemplation:

> We are poor passing facts,
> warned by that to give
> each figure in the photograph
> his living name (p. 127).

Where they are "inside" their subjects, teachers, like poets, obviously know many things outsiders do not know. They are aware of major, frequently divergent perspectives,

know how to work with specialized terms and symbols, and have skills in arranging language in the proper ways--arguments or sonnets. In this they will be different from their students. But if teachers go beyond the surface level of form and terms--even concepts and principles-- and begin to ask where concepts and patterns come from in the first place or what their meaning is, ready-made answers may dissolve upon impact, leaving things to marvel at. How teachers, children, and by, implication, scholars can thus be "in it together" is beautifully illustrated in Magdalene Lampert's (in press) account of fifth-grade mathematics teaching.

Contemplating infinity with fifth graders. Starting out from standard "skill" objectives at this grade level, namely, students' ability to determine whether two decimal numbers are equivalent or, if not, which is larger, a fifth-grade classroom ended up contemplating the paradox of bounded infinity. The vehicle and medium of movement were student thoughts and questions provoked by the fact that putting non-zero digits to the right of a decimal point *indefinitely*--although this will always make the number larger--will never make it as large as one single whole. This runs contrary to children's expectations induced (to the point of overlearning) through work with whole numbers.

The idea of infinity is marvellous. For what is one to make of the notion that something has no limit, being greater than any assignable quantity or magnitude? How can one grasp the quality or attribute of having no end, or picture an infinite series of quantities or expressions as something capable of being continued forever? Infinite amounts or durations, boundless spaces or expanses cannot be contained in human experience as lived. Invoked by the religious imagination as the attributes of God and applied to the concepts of time and space, the idea of infinity passed into mathematical use.

But how can one help feeling awe at the thought that an infinite series and, indeed, infinity itself (at least as an infinite number of numbers) can be found between zero and one? The corollary that there are as many numbers between these boundaries *as there are numbers* is no less astounding. Lampert (in press) observes that these are issues of a kind "fifth graders are capable of wondering about if wonderment is encouraged in their learning of mathematics" (pp. 15-16).

The mathematical resolution of the paradox of bounded infinity is the principle of infinite divisibility, or the idea that, between any two rational numbers, there is at least one other number or, what comes to the same thing, an infinite number of numbers.[10] Yet conceptual moves maintaining the stability of disciplinary networks do not dispel the wonder-struck thinking occasioned by really looking at poems, coupled pendulums, or boundless series of numbers in a tightly confined numerical space. If subject matter is the

[10]Why this comes to the same thing: if one takes at least two numbers, there is one number between them, between the three numbers so obtained there would be two more, and so on.

first object of contemplation in teaching, the *second* object of teaching and, as I shall argue, of the teacher's contemplative attention, are students.[11]

Looking at Students

That the teacher's attention is urged on toward other people follows from the relation that there is, in human life, between what one most delights in and the wish to be sharing it with other people, particularly one's friends. As Aristotle (Barnes, 1984) writes in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> Whatever existence means for each class of men, whatever it is for whose sake they value life, in *that* they wish to occupy themselves with their friends and some drink together, others dice together, others join in athletic exercises and hunting, or in the study of philosophy. (p. 1852)

This implies that genuine relatedness *in teaching* depends on being attached to one's teaching subjects in the first place, while also caring for others in sharing the goods of learning. To the extent that teaching involves as its second object other people--aiming to enlighten and perfect them as learners--teaching belongs to the active life and requires its exertions in the spirit of fellowship and kindness.

Aquinas therefore concludes that teaching *sometimes* belongs to the active life and *sometimes* to the contemplative life. Yet in moving from contemplation to action in teaching we do not subtract the contemplative but add the active dimension. Put differently, teaching is not a life of action tempered by occasional fits of abstraction, but, in the words of St. Thomas, the active life in teaching "proceeds from the fullness of contemplation" (Thomas Aquinas, 1966b, p. 205).

Moreover, the second "object" of teaching is also, and properly, an object of contemplation, and not just of action. This is suggested by Aristotle's words which connect the impulse to share what we value--or the exchanging of good things--with our valuing of other people, or our holding them in regard. I will adapt an example from Iris Murdoch (1985) (about the feelings of a mother toward her unsuitable daughter-in-law) to demonstrate what the contemplation of other people is like and show how that way of looking fits into teaching.

Seeing concrete persons in teaching. Suppose a secondary English teacher, Miss Jacobs, feels herself affected by a sense of hostility toward a student. From the first day of school, John grates on his teacher's feelings. He strikes her as uncouth in behavior and raw in intellect, overfamiliar and moody--always tiresomely adolescent. Miss Jacobs herself

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[11]"Object," again, must not be confused with "thing"; it means "that which attention is directed towards" and does not imply any reified conception of people.

is a quiet person, a bit spinsterish and severe but intelligent and well-intentioned. She knows that she is not at her best with boys of that age; in general, she has to admit that she does not like adolescents. A term passes. But Miss Jacobs does not perfect her view of John as an impossible boy, firming it up in outline and elaborating it in detail; that is, she does not make her aversive picture of this student more impenetrable and solid.

Miss Jacobs has instead come to see John as endearingly awkward; his raw intellect has become, in her eyes, an untutored intelligence a teacher should see as a challenge. John seems to her now not overfamiliar and excitable but trusting and emotional to the point of being vulnerable. Feelings protective, almost tender, supplant her earlier hostility. What has happened? John has not changed; he is still a rather pestilential adolescent. Nor has Miss Jacobs been busy in any external sense, or drawn up plans to change him. On the surface, Miss Jacobs has substituted one set of (moral) words for another, with positive instead of negative meaning. But, deep down, she has been thinking, deliberately, until she could give John, as Lowell put it, his "living name."

Miss Jacobs has *looked* at John (and beyond the stereotype), she has concentrated her attention on *him* (and away from her own sensitivities and limitations), achieving an inward stance and progress of intrinsic worth and attraction that does student *and* teacher good. Part of this progress--which, as all moral learning, is not without suffering--stems from setting aside self-centered feelings together with conventional and self-protective modes of classification; the greater part, however, stems from seeing John not just with accuracy but with kindness as a concrete person: needy, lovable, occasionally exasperating.

In this fashion, Miss Jacobs has come to see much more of John's traits and aspirations, some of which are repeated in other adolescents, but which she attends to "not as pieces of something homogenous that turns up in many places in the universe, but as forming the essential core of what that concrete person is" (Nussbaum, 1986, p. 357). There is John's generosity of heart and his impotent wish to see the world set right, which surface in awkwardness and mood swings. Why do adults, who act so god-like and knowing, make such a mess of things, between atomic bombs, famines, and divorces?

As Miss Jacobs feels John's accusing eyes on herself, she has to admit that she does not understand it either. She also admits to herself that she would prefer to be seen less as a representative of the pretentious and floundering tribe of grown-ups and more as herself: imperfect but real. Yet she realizes that it may not be in John's power, now, to fulfill that wish, nor is it his duty to do so. Through thinking, Miss Jacobs *prepares herself* to be loyal to John in her professional role and as a friend, seeing him concretely and choosing to make his good (as a learner) her own, while understanding that he does not owe a comparable loyalty to her (see, Fried, 1978). She can now recognize and respond

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to the possibilities in John; together with being "inside" her teaching subject, looking at students maintains Miss Jacob's craft.

Iris Murdoch (1985) summarizes this stance and process in the concept of "attention," a form of contemplation central to the thought of the philosopher-mystic Simone Weil. This process of thinking opens one's mind to seeing another person as an individual, worthy of regard--in the sense of observant attention and kindly feeling. In this way of looking, to quote Simone Weil (Panichas, 1977), the "soul empties itself of all its own contents in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all his truth" (p. 51). Though it requires being simple, attentive perception is not easy; it is one's corrigible vision of other people, and the delight taken in their reality, the love and admiration of their truth, which is their individuality, separate and distinct from oneself.

Perhaps when some teachers tell us that they decided to go into teaching because they love children they mean loving to look at children attentively: holding them in regard---noticing, caring, valuing--thus seeing them accurately and justly, as they are. Reality thus takes on a normative character. The progression implicit in the concepts of truth, love, and justice implies that the attentive thinking we have associated with *both* objects of contemplation in teaching is fallible and open-ended, infinitely perfectible and inherently appealing. A counterexample should further elucidate the place of contemplation in teaching.

Seeing oneself in students and subject matter. Like Miss Jacobs, the teacher in Muriel Spark's (1961) novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is an intelligent spinster. Professing truth, beauty, and goodness, she does not care about history or arithmetic, but teaches the young girls in her charge her life and opinions. Unlike Miss Jacobs, she is supremely sure of her ground in everything and relentless in her egotism. "Give me," Miss Brodie says, "a girl at an impressionable age, and she is mine for life" (p. 16). Returning after summer, her pupils do not give an account of themselves in the time-honored "What I did in my holidays" essay; instead, their teacher treats them to an update on the latest developments in her heart and soul. History lessons turn into personal stories. A complicated long division at the blackboard is the cover for instruction in the subject of Miss Brodie, who takes pains to make herself adorable.

Miss Brodie claims insight and spiritual vision, declaring: "Art and religion first; then philosophy; lastly science" (p. 39). While most of the girls still count on their fingers at the age of 10, they have, she feels, at least had the benefits of her experiences in Italy--never mind their qualifying exams for Senior School. Asked, "Who is the greatest Italian painter?" a girl replies, "Leonardo da Vinci"; her teacher dismisses this answer: "That is incorrect. The answer is Giotto, he is my favorite" (p. 18). "Her" girls try to take the

classics rather than modern languages-- regardless of their strengths and personal inclinations--because of Miss Brodie's preferences that stand regardless of children.

Of course, not all girls in the class belong to the Brodie set. Hers are the brighter ones, remarkable for looks, instinct or a special talent to amuse her: "the leaven in the lump." Miss Brodie makes these special girls "her vocation"; that is, she trains them up in her confidence, in her image: "You are mine," she affirms, "I mean of my stamp and cut" (p. 143). Fixing her possessive feelings and ambitions on these few, she overrides any expressions of their individuality that do not suit herself. They are supposed to be the best because they grow to be like her. In eerie confirmation, a painter infatuated with Miss Brodie portrays all her students in her likeness.

Life and experience do not fail to provide this teacher with chances for second thoughts but she shows herself unteachable. As the Brodie set enters Senior School, for instance, they are at first refreshed by the air of thought; dazzled by their new subjects, they communicate their sense of intellectual adventure to Miss Brodie.

> Their days were now filled with unfamiliar shapes and sounds which were magically dissociated from ordinary life, the great circles and triangles of geometry, the hieroglyphics of Greek on the page and the various curious hisses and spits some of the Greek sounds made from the teacher's lips--"psst . . . psooch . . . " (p. 111)

They respond with enthusiasm (one of Miss Brodie's more appealing endowments) to different teaching subjects; they lack, however, the intellectual and moral seriousness that is part of caring for a subject (dispositions altogether absent in their teacher):

> Rose Stanley sliced a worm down the middle with the greatest absorption during her first terms biology; although in two terms' time she shuddered at the thought and had dropped the subject. Eunice Gardner discovered the Industrial Revolution, its rights and wrongs, to such an extent that the history teacher, a vegetarian communist, had high hopes of her which were dashed within a few months when Eunice reverted to reading novels based on the life of Mary Queen of Scots. (p. 127)

In due time, Miss Brodie resumes her sway over the girls.

This teacher admires everything that appears grand, including fascism and, Spark intimates, the shining boots of leather that come with it. She cannot bear the thought that "any of her girls should grow up not largely dedicated to some vocation" (p. 92). Just like she feels dedicated to her set, they must all become dedicated women. The irony is that this teacher, praising insight and the surrender of self in the service of others, is unseeing and unyielding; she shows herself, as L. C. Garrison (undated) explains:

> throughout the novel as totally incapable of perceiving others *as they are* and thus understanding them. . . . Everything is seen through the lenses of self as dominant and determining. (p. 20)[12]

In her students and teaching subjects, Miss Brodie can only see herself. Consequently, her friendship creates harm; it "worked itself into their bones, so that they could not break away without, as it were, splitting their bones to do so" (p. 168). Lacking genuine relatedness, Miss Brodie never gets out of her students' way but pretends, in her person, to be the way; she does not let them fall but makes them fall, and not for purposes of learning.

Concluding Reflections

The starting point of my argument was that scholars have--in equating teacher thinking with making particular and solitary decisions--only partially comprehended, if not misunderstood, the human activity of thinking in teaching. In general, it is difficult to lead an excellent life if basic human activities are not seen in the right light. Scholarly failure converts into practical failure through policy, and also by its support of common misconceptions. Research may also mislead policy and practice by an authoritative introduction of irrelevancies. I have turned to the concept of contemplation to broaden and re-cast the picture of teacher thinking, shifting from a metaphor of decision to a metaphor of comprehending vision that entails shared attachments.

Looking back on Miss Jacobs and Miss Brodie shows that teaching calls for contemplation, as a kind of "devoted thinking" in which one is not possessed by the subjective will or given conceptions: a "refined and honest perception of what is really the case, a patient and just discernment of what confronts one, which is the result not simply of opening one's eyes but of a certainly perfectly familiar kind of moral discipline" (Murdoch, 1985, p. 38). There can, however, be no genuine relatedness in teaching, no resonating to people's possibilities as learners, without intelligent care and concern for teaching subjects. Being a student's educational friend is no merely personal matter but a mutual engagement in learning that embraces admiring wonder. I have not, in this paper, addressed the concrete difficulties of this engagement but aimed to clarify how teachers can prepare themselves for it through thinking.

Practice is structured by a constitutive background of fidelities that hold no matter what. In carefully attending to learners, subject matter, and the ends of their work,

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[12]In unraveling Miss Brodie's story, L. C. Garrison works with Rousseau's (1762/1979) distinction between two kinds of self-love: *amour de soi*, which is self-sustaining, secure in itself, and balanced (thus necessary for autonomy and moral perception) and *amour propre*, a self-love that needs to dominate and devalue others in order to establish a sense of self-worth (thus infringing on others' autonomy and ultimately devaluing the self). It is not only in teaching that the second kind of self-love--barring self-criticism and the just consideration of others--is a source of evil.

teachers maintain and perfect their craft and themselves, and enlighten and perfect others. Clearly this concept of practice goes beyond describing what a teacher does or what most teachers may happen to do, appealing instead to an idea of teaching as an excellent activity that is a bearer of human good and has a distinctive scope, proper energies and ends. Its goodness lies in the progression from shining to illuminating others: this progression is bound up with particular and general human virtues, and with truth, justice and love.

If we return to the meaning of "theory" as looking at, viewing, or contemplating, we can see that theory and practice in teaching are already related, requiring no external or mechanistic connections--nor perhaps a great many contributions from educational theory or research--but our concerted and enduring efforts of attention in everyday life that recognize and build structures of value in the light of ideals of perfection. The moral force of the requirement for looking stems from the fact that, while human vision is fallible and open-ended, people are almost compelled by what they *can* see: Virtue depends on vision.

If contemplative thought is, in principle, at the heart of teaching, it depends, for its flourishing, on political and practical wisdom, being vulnerable to impediment, as to its occurrence and quality, the more fully it is integrated into the active life. It holds for schools just as for society at large that it "is one of the signs as well as one of the aims of a good polity that the activities of contemplation and the comprehensive practical life support each other" (Rorty, 1980, p. 392). The problem is that--as the promise of contemplation increases--its vulnerability increases as well.

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